

Ride the CAT
Cross-Acton Transit

Establishing a Fixed Route Community Shuttle: The Acton Experience

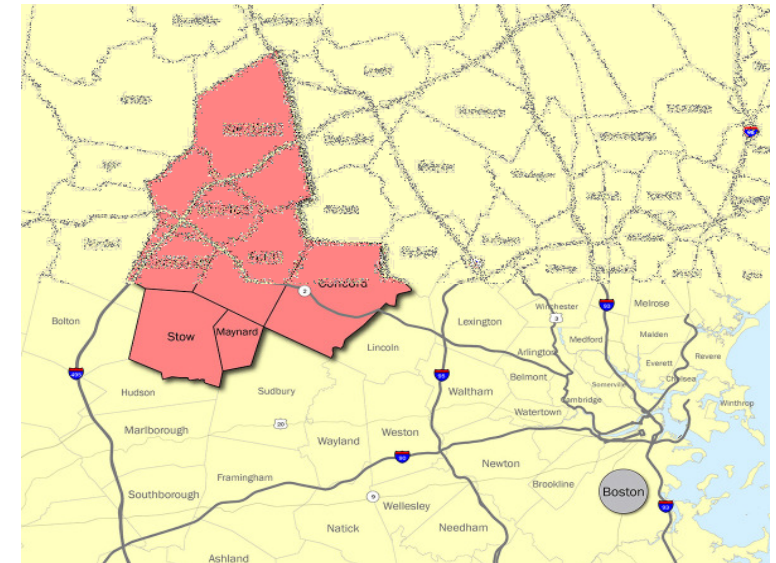
A presentation for the Massachusetts Community Transportation Coordination Conference

Tuesday, May 3, 2016
College of the Holy Cross, Hogan Campus Center
Worcester, Massachusetts

A Service of CrossTown Connect: What's That?



- An award-winning, membership based Transportation Management Association.
- The first **regional** Community Compact with the Baker/Polito administration.
- A public-private partnership between communities and businesses aimed at improving mobility and transportation options, increasing economic development opportunities and reducing traffic congestion and air pollution in the region.
- Partner communities include: Acton, Boxborough, Littleton, Maynard and Westford with participation from the towns of Concord and Stow.
- Businesses partners include: IBM, Red Hat, Juniper Networks, The Guiterrez Co., Saracen Properties (Mill and Main) and West Acton Villageworks.

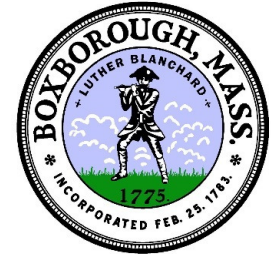


Members



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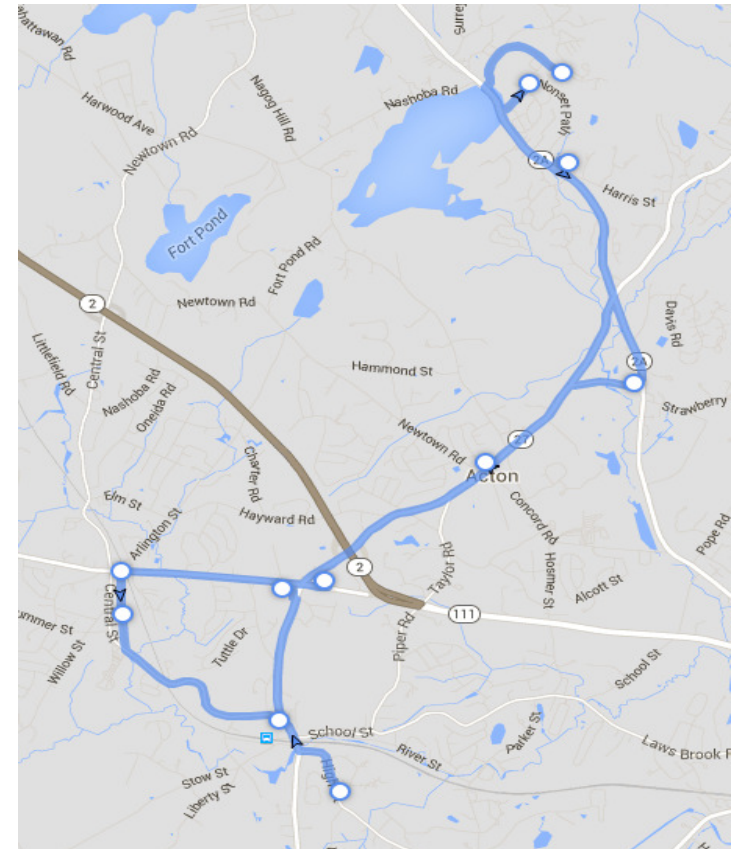
CrossTownConnect

What is *Cross-Acton Transit*?

- A fixed route, 14 passenger shuttle that services housing developments, key business centers, the Council on Aging and the West Acton Commuter Rail station on the Fitchburg Line.



The CAT travels down Rt. 2A in from housing in North Acton to the Donelan's shopping plaza, down Main St. (Rt. 27) to Kelly's Corner, along Mass. Ave. (Rt. 111) to West Acton Center, down Central St. to South Acton Station, over to Audubon Dr./COA, back up Main St.



Sachem Way	Nagog Woods (Postal Kiosk)	Avalon Drive (Leasing Office)	Goulds Plaza (Donelan's Between Front Entrances)	Acton Plaza 1 & 2 (at Roche Brothers)	Acton Pharmacy (563 Massachusetts Avenue)	Windsor Green (68 Windsor Avenue)	S. Acton MBTA Station	Council on Aging/Audubon Hill Condominiums	Kmart (Front Entrance)	Town Hall/Library
8:00 a	8:04 a	8:09 a	No stops				8:25 a	8:30 a	8:40 a	8:48 a
9:00 a	9:04 a	9:09 a	9:16 a	9:24 a	9:28 a	9:30 a	9:35 a	9:39 a	9:44 a	9:50 a
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6:00 p	6:04 p	6:09 p	No stops							

Don't see your stop on the route? Give us a call to see if we can accommodate your request.

Connect to MBTA Services at the
South Acton Commuter Rail Station
Schedule at www.mbta.com



Vehicle Operated by:
TransAction Corporate Shuttles
5 Wheeling Avenue, Woburn, MA
781-895-1100 www.tcshuttles.com

For more information on regional program
to www.crosstownconnect.org

Timeline

- Soft launch: November, 2015
- Ribbon cutting: January 29, 2015
- Ridership goal for 1st month: 50
- Actual ridership for 1st month: >100
- Ridership goal after 1 year: 500
- April ridership: 194
- Summer 2016 = big marketing push



CAT Ribbon Cutting Ceremony left to right: Rep. Jen Benson, Sen. Jamie Eldridge, Acton Selectman Franny Osman, Acton Transportation Coordinator Doug Halley, Rep. Cory Atkins, LRTA Administrator Jim Scanlan.

How Did We Get Here?

- **Advocates and political will**

- A dedicated team of advocates set fixed route service as a goal several years ago and persisted until it became a reality (a relatively short period of time).
- Community outreach by this team built support within the community.

- **Community need**

- A community survey in Acton identified lack of transportation options as one of the most pressing issues facing its citizens.

- **A model to aspire to: MWRTA Westborough Shuttle**

- When it came time to plan Cross-Acton Transit's route, we modeled it after a successful example because we had similar goals in mind.
- A blend of commuters and local community.

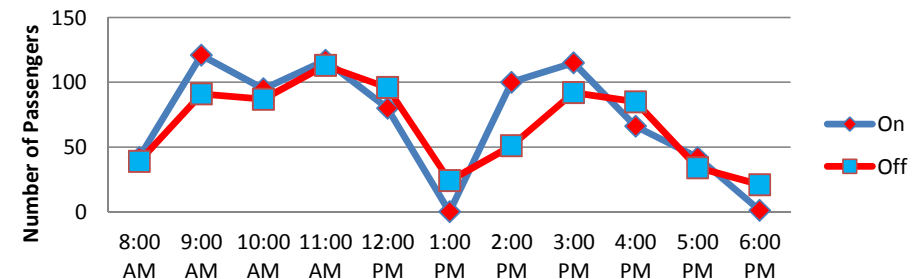
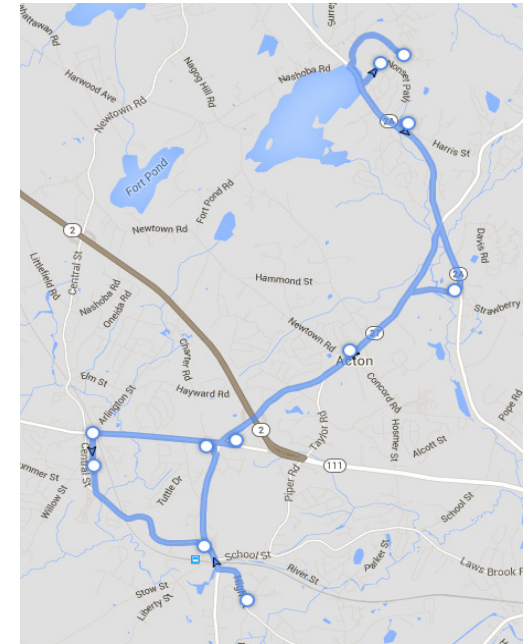
- **Data, data, data**

Data is Your Friend; Identify it, Use it

- Most communities have data from their Councils on Aging (COAs).
 - This is a good place to start, as many users are those who for various reasons do not drive.
- Acton was in a unique position among similar communities because it had a more robust network of demand-response services (again, thanks to tireless local advocates).
 - Data was compiled from several Acton services including the COA, MinuteVan Dial-A-Ride, Road Runner and Rail Shuttle.
- Surveys help to answer **many** questions.
 - Town of Acton survey.
 - The Minuteman Regional Coordinating Council conducted surveys both for businesses and community members.
 - CTPS conducted a survey on employment transportation with anonymous data provided from local companies combined with census data on residential patterns.
- It was important for us to use all of this data to predict who our potential clientele would be.

Route Planning, Public Feedback and Flexibility

- We used all the data from surveys and existing services to plan the route of the CAT.
 - The assumption was that some of our demand-response riders would also utilize the CAT. That assumption proved to be correct.
- Adaptation and responsiveness
 - The reason for the soft launch was to incorporate feedback and tweak the route and timing as necessary.
- Data continues to drive our decisions and we continue to incorporate feedback.



Fares and Funding

- The fare is \$1.00 for all riders as we wanted to keep fares low to be inclusive of all demographics.
- Acton falls under the Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA) catchment area, but lies on the periphery and has no fixed route service.
 - Acton pays part of its local assessments to the LRTA and part to the MBTA.
 - LRTA funds half of the service through local assessments and Acton funds the other half.
 - A Town Meeting vote authorized Acton to contribute its share of the cost through Transportation Enterprise Fund.
- There are a number of state and federal grant programs to fund community transportation.
 - These are great resources, but you must apply and there is no guarantee they will be awarded to you.
 - CrossTown Connect has been successful in securing funds through the Community Transit Grant Program.
 - Grants can help get there, but it's more sustainable to identify long-term sources of funding.
- There are options available through state and federal programs for assistance in acquiring vehicles if your community is prepared to take on vehicle ownership.

Building Ridership: A Coordinated Marketing Campaign

- **Marketing has included:**

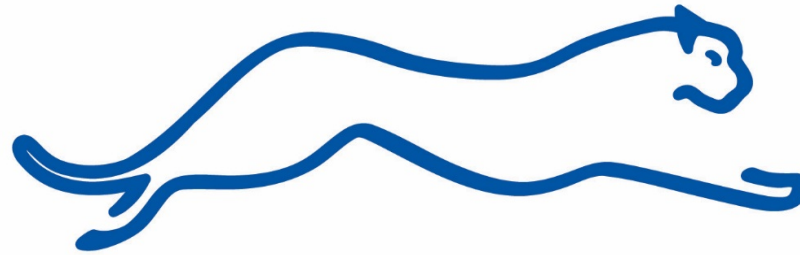
- Naming and branding the service.
- Posters with schedules placed in public areas, at businesses such as supermarkets and at existing stops including housing developments.
- Flyers with schedules distributed at similar locations as above, community events.
- In-person promotion at community events.
- Acton TV created an informational piece filmed both onboard and off CAT.
- Advertisements on community information signs placed in high-traffic areas such as on Main St. in front of the Police Station and at the transfer station.
- Twitter handle: @ActonTransit
- Content on websites such as CrossTown Connect, Town of Acton, CAT shuttle tracker.

Building Ridership: Reliability and Convenience

- Throughout the process we have continually focused on creating value for customers.
- Predictability and timing
 - Considerable effort was made to keep our route to a one-hour round trip for two reasons:
 1. To keep it as easy-to-remember and reliable as possible.
 2. To keep passenger time on the bus as reasonable as possible.
- Shuttle tracker
 - We employ an on-line shuttle tracker that pinpoints the vehicle's location in real-time as well as furnishes other information such as the schedule.
 - Tracker is also a downloadable app for a smart phone or tablet.

Next Steps

- Continue to market the service in the community, increase ridership.
- Build *commuter* ridership.
 - New Fitchburg Line schedule with earlier reverse commutes will make this a viable “last mile” link to key areas of town.
- Identify additional fixed route needs/potential stops.
- Assess potential synergies with other Acton services and those of neighboring communities.
- CrossTown Connect will continue to work to create an interlinked regional network of services.



Ride the CAT

Cross-Acton Transit

For more information: www.crossactontransit.com
www.crosstownconnect.org

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